



Goals for Asheville



## *Community Forum Summary Report*

*January 30, 2007*



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# executive summary

The executive summary below presents common focus areas expressed by citizens at the January 30, 2007 Bele Chere Community Forum. Approximately 75 citizens attended the forum and participated in small focus groups to develop consensus on two key questions related to Bele Chere. This summary represents the top priorities included in each group's top three answers.

## **Question 1: If you could change or improve one thing about Bele Chere, what would it be?**

### **#1: Make Bele Chere more local and reflective of Asheville's unique character.**

5 out of 5 groups (100%) included making Bele Chere more inclusive of the local community and/or reflective of Asheville's unique character as one of their top priorities for changing or improving the festival. This recommendation was the most commonly mentioned and highest rated suggestion throughout the forum. Recommendations in this area included using local promoters to select bands and musicians; incorporating more local musicians, crafters, food vendors and artists into the festival; developing partnerships with local businesses; allowing local microbreweries to sell beer at the festival, and; offering kids activities that are not driven by national sponsors.

### **Tied #2: Change the date of the festival.**

2 out of 5 groups (40%) recommended changing the date of the festival to a time of year when downtown activity is not at its peak. Two groups specifically recommended considering September for a new festival date.

### **Tied for #2: Explore other funding models and sponsorship opportunities to reduce the burden on taxpayers.**

2 out of 5 groups (40%) suggested looking at the festival's funding model to consider alternatives that would reduce or eliminate contributions from property taxes. One group suggested the revenue gap should be funded by the Tourism and Development Authority to eliminate taxpayer contributions while another suggested decreasing taxpayer dollars by seeking other sponsorship opportunities.

## **Question 2: What do you value most or like the best about Bele Chere?**

### **#1: The visibility and community pride the festival brings to Asheville.**

4 out of 5 groups (80%) indicated that the marketing, visibility and sense of community pride was the most valued aspect of Bele Chere. Different groups characterized this sentiment in different ways: one group attributed this to the volunteerism Bele Chere attracts from the community while others described it as an appreciation for the first-time visitors the festival brings to Asheville's downtown. The sense of community pride was also attributed to the tradition of Bele Chere, the enjoyment of experiencing downtown and an appreciation for the city's efforts to support, promote and market Asheville.

### **Tied for #2: A free festival with free music.**

2 out of 5 groups (40%) valued the cost free portions of the festival.

### **Tied for #2: The quality and/or diversity of music.**

2 out of 5 groups (40%) valued the mix of local, regional, nationally-recognized and international music at Bele Chere.

# focus group summaries

## group one

### question 1

#### top three answers

1. Make TDA share cost of festival
2. Have alcohol-free zones through out the festival, but offer a small beer garden on Sunday
3. Focus on roots of festival - back to basics
3. Improve parking & transit situation

### question 2

1. Entertainment, Arts, & Asheville food (Taste of Asheville)
2. Great festival, good achievement, good for morale & business
3. Community volunteerism helps build sense community

#### complete list

- ♦ Create opportunities for more local artisans to participate
- ♦ Move the festival to early to mid-September
- ♦ Offer it for sale to a corporate promoter or sponsorship
- ♦ Improve parking & transit situation
- ♦ More handicapped access
- ♦ Eliminate ticketed events
- ♦ Make TDA share cost of festival
- ♦ Improve opportunity for more local bands to perform at the festival
- ♦ Improve quality of attendees vs. quantity
- ♦ Seek other revenue opportunities such as wristbands
- ♦ Focus more on the roots of festival-back to basics
- ♦ Have alcohol-free zones throughout festival but have small beer gardens on Sunday
- ♦ Opportunity to have parent/child activities
- ♦ Entertainment, arts, Asheville food
- ♦ Adult things at night, teens; something for all age groups
- ♦ Enjoy diversity of attendees
- ♦ The ability to have pedestrian access the all of downtown
- ♦ Great festival, good achievement, good for morale & business
- ♦ Good presentation of city to outsiders
- ♦ Compared to other festivals, this is a top-notch festival
- ♦ The openness of it all, don't have gates; free
- ♦ Good for business
- ♦ The music & entertainment has improved over the past years
- ♦ For a large festival, it is safe and orderly
- ♦ Community volunteerism
- ♦ Information Booths

# focus group summaries

## group two

### question 1

#### top three answers

1. Create a couple's dance stage
2. Focus on local culture
3. Alternative time of year
3. Keep the entire festival free

### question 2

1. Diversity and quality of music
2. City's promotion of event, downtown and Asheville
3. The festival put Asheville on the map
3. It's an efficient, well organized festival (especially clean up)

#### complete list

- ◆ Place booths in a way that allows stores to be open
- ◆ More culture/ethnic diversity
- ◆ Create dance stage like Bigmingham, AL
- ◆ More space between booths; make them more attractive
- ◆ Alternative time of year (shoulder month)
- ◆ All free events
- ◆ Develop more refined infrastructure
- ◆ Make it a local cultural event
- ◆ Better distribution of stages/booths
- ◆ Local beer
- ◆ Multiple children's areas throughout festival
- ◆ More space for Taste of Asheville
- ◆ Integrate merchants with booths
- ◆ Widen the area geographically
- ◆ Add street dancing
- ◆ Recommit to mission statement with a focus on Asheville
- ◆ Financially independent from City of Asheville
- ◆ Expand to River District
- ◆ Enhances/brings diversity, arts, crafts
- ◆ City's promotion of economy
- ◆ Best street festival in Western NC
- ◆ Diversity/quality of music
- ◆ Sense of community/ feeling of festival
- ◆ Quality/diversity of crafts
- ◆ Great party with friends
- ◆ Best Festival
- ◆ Put Asheville on map
- ◆ Very effective Bele Chere organization
- ◆ Bele Chere has unique culture/life
- ◆ Bele Chere's role in making Asheville great

# focus group summaries

## group three

### question 1

#### top three answers

1. Time of year.
2. Open selection of big bands to input from community; get away from using non-local promoters.
3. Create 4 smaller festivals that are more representative of downtown in food, art, film, etc.

### question 2

1. Mix of local, regional & bigger acts together. Quality & diversity of music.
2. Free entertainment (for the most part).
3. Taste of Asheville.

#### complete list

- ◆ Relationship with local business
- ◆ Make the festival smaller by limiting food, crafts, vendors, acts to locals
- ◆ Time of year
- ◆ Survey local people; be open to what community wants to see
- ◆ Use local promoters
- ◆ Safety - make smaller, spread out or move to another location
- ◆ Move out of downtown to the river area
- ◆ Balance the budget
- ◆ Diversity and bringing in outside entertainment
- ◆ Move out of downtown
- ◆ 4 smaller festivals
- ◆ All performances free (offer to support monetarily, eg. Souvenir pin)
- ◆ Utilize Civic Center during festival
- ◆ Open aspects of big bands to community; more input on headliners & local music
- ◆ Get away from using larger promoter
- ◆ Series of smaller events building to main event
- ◆ Move to another time of year
- ◆ Concentrated trash and port-a-john areas; distribute them more widely
- ◆ More for events for young kids and teens; more diversified
- ◆ Sponsorship structured to promote local business and products
- ◆ Large stages are loud; move them to less business-oriented areas
- ◆ Too much nighttime noise for residents
- ◆ Brings tourism to area
- ◆ Free entertainment (for the most part)
- ◆ Taste of Asheville
- ◆ Publicity for region
- ◆ Brings local residents to downtown
- ◆ Brings people together
- ◆ Mixing local & bigger acts together
- ◆ Exposure for downtown business
- ◆ Quantity & diversity of music
- ◆ Dog jumping pool
- ◆ Local dogs
- ◆ Like big name bands
- ◆ Keep in downtown
- ◆ All events located in or near downtown

# focus group summaries

## group four

### question 1

#### top three answers

1. Make festival more reflective of downtown community by incorporating local beer, music, artists and local industry professionals in booking talent, kids activities that are not sponsor driven.
2. Expand and improve layout to include Eagle-Market, Grove Arcade and Lex Avenue.
3. Explore funding model to reduce taxpayer burden and/or develop new sponsorship opportunities.

### question 2

1. The marketing and exposure of downtown Asheville & WNC; highlights local business & entertainment, and brings new people & tourists to downtown.
2. Fun, exciting to get out to a festival & experience downtown
3. The tradition of Bele Chere.

#### complete list

- ♦ Asheville is an arts destination, dining destination; make BC more reflective of Asheville's character
- ♦ More emphasis on local artists
- ♦ Expand to other areas of downtown area (Lex, The Block, Grove Arcade)
- ♦ Better beer from local crafters
- ♦ Better bands; not Train but like Galactica
- ♦ Make festival more reflective of Asheville values
- ♦ Taxpayer money should not subsidize the festival; privatize and consider local options
- ♦ Do not allow sponsors to influence programming
- ♦ Develop more creative ways to allow sponsors participate (no trinkets, etc.)
- ♦ Remember Asheville as a family destination
- ♦ Expand footprint to include historic landmarks
- ♦ Incorporate Civic Center for shows, ice skating
- ♦ Hire professional to select/hire bands
- ♦ Local industry professionals to participate on music committee
- ♦ City is actively sponsoring downtown; don't want city to walk away from contributing to DT success
- ♦ Showcasing local artists (may be diluted but this is the best part)
- ♦ Exposes new people to downtown; they learn new places to go/things to do
- ♦ Some out-of-towners only come downtown for Bele Chere
- ♦ Listening to music that I wouldn't otherwise be exposed to
- ♦ The tradition; meeting family and friends; traditions of fun
- ♦ Exposure to NC artists
- ♦ Promotion of Asheville & downtown as a destination for visitors (regional and out-of-state)
- ♦ Opportunity to showcase the city to out-of-town friends pride
- ♦ An event that allows you to take your family out to do something different-nature of festivals
- ♦ Taste of Asheville

# focus group summaries

## group five

### question 1

#### top three answers

1. Bele Chere should showcase the festival mission; it is currently least representative (like) of Asheville
2. Needs more focus & a brand.
3. Allow microbreweries to participate; they are local and in Asheville, but Budweiser is the sponsor

### question 2

1. Free Music.
2. Concept of a free festival.
3. City was open-minded to consider such a festival when other cities have tried and failed.

#### complete list

- ♦ Business (so large and loses \$\$)
- ♦ Doesn't reflect the mission statement; doesn't showcase Asheville's uniqueness
- ♦ Out of hand because of alcohol.
- ♦ Not representative.
- ♦ No alcohol.
- ♦ Needs to be more focused
- ♦ Needs a brand
- ♦ Too successful from the scale
- ♦ Change location - river
- ♦ Provide an area for tents
- ♦ Closed three days; loss of businesses; residents
- ♦ Downsize
- ♦ Move time of year; not driving, peak tourist season
- ♦ Economic impact (compared to week before/after)
- ♦ Scale down so everyone can benefit
- ♦ Exclusive for some businesses
- ♦ Change the date
- ♦ Spring date?
- ♦ Parking
- ♦ Make it advantageous for region
- ♦ 300k people in 1 place
- ♦ 159 crafters-only 25 local (not capitalizing on local crafts)
- ♦ Microbreweries are here but Budweiser is sponsor
- ♦ Local theme
- ♦ Place kids activities near music
- ♦ Focus more on music and diversity
- ♦ It's a phenomenon what can we do with it?
- ♦ Are we using it to full potential?
- ♦ Out of control
- ♦ Sunday because it is the calmest (it exists)
- ♦ Free
- ♦ Food Variety
- ♦ Diversity of Asheville's Culture
- ♦ Appreciate what it has done but appreciate looking at ways to improve
- ♦ Music (free)
- ♦ Having alcohol on the street - especially local
- ♦ Enhances sales of local brew
- ♦ 600 people volunteer community pride
- ♦ Artwork
- ♦ Can find ways to make better
- ♦ Appreciate City workers
- ♦ City has open mind to consider the festival many cities would do it.
- ♦ Other cities have tried but not viable like this one
- ♦ Cordial police force
- ♦ Variety of events-something for everyone
- ♦ Lots of money coming into region

appendix: written comments